

“NEIGHBORHOODS THAT WORK”

Award Recipients, 2001

Ward 7 – Laura Pearson

Category 1: Country Bluffs Neighborhood Watch

Country Bluffs Neighborhood Watch came together through the efforts of Valerie Littlehawk and Duane Plankel, a husband and wife team, who were frustrated by blight in their La Sierra neighborhood. Recognizing the importance of community involvement and the limitation of the City to solve the problems, they organized their neighborhood to help. They organized neighborhood clean-ups and graffiti paint-outs. They set up a phone tree for communication and established a disaster phone tree and a “who to call if you are scared” phone tree. A Safe Streets Now action was brought against the property owner of a large area of vacant land which was contributing to the blight issues, and the neighbors worked with city hall to have a barricade installed at a critical area to discourage the criminal activity taking place there. Since the neighborhood got involved, calls for service to the police department have diminished, and the neighborhood has become a community.

Category 2: La Sierra Hills Neighborhood Watch

In 1992, the residents of La Sierra Hills decided to join together to build neighborhood relationships and organize to keep crime out of their neighborhood. They established a Neighborhood Watch and held meetings to establish priorities and identify positive ways to maintain their quality of life. Over the years, the group has grown to include an Area Coordinator, Tom Martin, who works closely with over ten Block Captains to report suspicious activity, mediate neighbor disputes, publish newsletters to announce births, promotions, etc., and schedule seasonal parties where they demonstrate what being a good neighbor is all about.

Category 3: Hedrick Avenue Neighborhood Watch

During the past year, a major drug lab was discovered on Hedrick Avenue and inspired the residents to mobilize in an effort to strengthen neighborhood ties and enhance the beauty of their neighborhood. Longtime residents Bonny Poulsen, Tony Esquibel, Belle Beaven, and Bill MacFarlane initiated the effort by talking to neighbors, listing concerns, and organizing a series of meetings with police, code enforcement, the Office of Neighborhoods, and the Riverside County Probation Department. The number of residents participating rose to over 40 in a short time as they expressed the commitment to making a difference in their neighborhood. They have established a list of priorities and have been reporting crimes and quality of life issues to city departments and attended training workshops through the Office of Neighborhoods on effective neighborhood strategies. Recently the group held formal elections and established eight subcommittees which range from home improvement to holiday toy drives to a welcome committee for out-reach to new residents. They truly embody “neighborliness and caring.”